

**Gravina Access Project
Reasonable Alternatives
Public Comments Summary Document
March 2002**



Agreement No: 36893013
DOT&PF Project No: 67698
Federal Project No: ACHP-0922(5)

Prepared for:



State of Alaska
Department of Transportation and
Public Facilities
6860 Glacier Highway
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Prepared by:



Inc.
St.

March 2002

Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction	1
2.0	Brief Summary of Public Involvement	1
3.0	Summary of Public Comment	1

Appendices

Appendix A	Public Comments Letters Received
Appendix B	Public Comments Emails Received
Appendix C	Public Comments Comment Sheets Received
Appendix D	Ketchikan Public Open House Sign-in Sheets

1.0 Introduction

This document summarizes the comments received on the reasonable alternatives since DOT&PF's announcement (January 7, 2002) of the state's recommended alternative for access to Gravina Island – the Pennock Island (F3) alternative.

Since the announcement, the public has provided input by email and written correspondence, and at two (February 11 and 27) public open house meetings through comment sheets and verbal input. The table in section 3.0 provides a summary of public comments received through email and written correspondence since the DOT&PF announcement.

2.0 Brief Summary of Public Involvement

The public and the Ketchikan community were encouraged to provide input. Many avenues existed for the community to learn about the reasonable alternatives under consideration. Technical reports and an evaluation of the alternatives were made available to the public at the Ketchikan Public Library and Gravina Access Project Office in January. The website was updated with Technical Reports and descriptions of recent project activities. For the February 11 and 27 Public Open Houses at the Ted Ferry Civic Center in Ketchikan, advertisements appeared in the Ketchikan Daily News, notices were placed throughout the community, and post card notices were mailed (for the Feb. 11 Open House). The latest Gravina Access Project newsletter was published in the Ketchikan Daily News on February 9.

3.0 Summary of Public Comment

Most of the public comments summarized in the following table came from individuals. However, the Greater Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce, Alaska Coastwise Pilots Association, SouthEast Alaska Pilots Association, and the U.S. Department of Commerce – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration sent in organizational letters with their comments on the F3 Alternative. Specifically, SouthEast Alaska Pilots' Association requested the DOT&PF to consider a modified F3, or C3(a) and C4 alternatives if a bridge is the community recommendation. The Alaska Coastwise Pilots Association emphasized the "time is money" issue – "the economic impact on a community with cruise ships spending less time in port or eliminating a port from itineraries altogether could be huge over time." The Alaska Coastwise Pilots Association also commented that the "efficiency and safety of entry and exit together with the superb downtown berthing facilities for large vessels are primary factors in the success of this activity and its benefit to the community." Several long-term Ketchikan residents wrote in favor of the F3 Alternative. A 30-year resident hopes to "live long enough to see the Pennock crossing completed." A life-long resident of 52 years thinks the town needs the high-low bridge alternative.

Public Comments Submitted (January – February 2002)

Issue	Public Comment
F3 Alternative (Support)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Greater Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce expressed their desire for and acceptance of F3. ▪ Although one of the most expensive alternatives, F3 gives the Ketchikan community the opportunity to expand. ▪ F3 is the best alternative to Gravina both aesthetically and practically. ▪ F3 is the most logical location for bridge spans to Gravina Island. ▪ F3 would quadruple the property value on Pennock Island, which would quadruple property taxes. ▪ F3 is the second most expensive alternative to build and the most costly in life cycle cost. ▪ The SouthEast Alaska Pilots' Association supports improved access to Gravina Island, but does not support F3. ▪ Increased difficulty of vessel maneuvers, the delays in ship arrivals and departures, and the reduced capacity of the port caused by F3 are very substantial. F3 creates a less efficient port in Ketchikan (From a captain who has been navigating and piloting the Tongass Narrows and Southeast Alaska waterways since 1974).
F3 Alternative (Concerns)	
Airport Parking	
Bridge Design	
Bridges Elsewhere	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No parking is currently available at the airport, so people will still have to ride some form of public transportation if the bridge is built. ▪ The runway extension plans will put the new road under the runway. ▪ What are the plans to accommodate all the parking at the airport once this access is completed? How far from the terminal building will this parking be and who will be responsible to build and maintain that and the roads leading to and from?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Should be wider than 40' to accommodate big trucks and further road expansion. ▪ Residents of Pennock Island should have a ramp way on to the bridge to make it worth the inconvenience of having it near their property and water source. ▪ Bridges spans will need to have range lights and boards on them. ▪ Will the bridge be designed to withstand 100 mph winds? ▪ Allowing 200 feet of vertical clearance for both the East and West Channel bridges would allow continued access to all of Ketchikan and Tongass Narrows for most vessels.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compare Ketchikan to Norway – if Norwegians can replace a ferry with a bridge, they do. (Examples include: Raftsundetbrua, has a concrete cantilever design, similar to the proposed Gravina Access Project West Channel Bridge; Austevoll has two concrete cantilever bridges, the Stølmabrua [301 meters] and Storekalsoybrua)

Issue	Public Comment
Cost	Bridges are too expensive; retain current ferry service.
Economic growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The real growth industry in Ketchikan is the cruise ship/tourist industry, and anything that impacts that business in a negative way is bad for Ketchikan. ▪ Ketchikan has consistently been a maritime community and needs support for ferries and maritime jobs because those are the skills currently in the population. ▪ Access to the Ketchikan port is of utmost importance. ▪ Any downsizing of the waterways that compromise the Ketchikan port will likely precipitate a corresponding downsizing of its existing economy. ▪ Ketchikan is an economically depressed area that is currently struggling to cope with the cost and facilities for such basics as sewer disposal, solid waste disposal, enough electricity, road maintenance, and more – we shouldn't be considering adding to these burdens on the basis the availability of "pork barrel" money.
East Channel of Tongass Narrows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The span across the East Channel must have a 200' clearance to accommodate large vessels. ▪ The bridge should be high span rather than low span. ▪ East Channel affords more room and lighter currents. ▪ East Channel should never be sacrificed with a low vertical bridge clearance as it is a primary route on the Inside Passage to points north. ▪ Larger cruise ships will refuse to enter the narrow channel on windy days and possibly bypass Ketchikan altogether.
Ferry Access to Airport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If bridges are built, retain a ferry service for "walk-on" travelers who don't want to drive to the airport.
Floatplane Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The weather conditions for flying in southeast Alaska are marginal anyway without adding another obstruction (a bridge). ▪ Building a high bridge in Ketchikan is problematic, with Ketchikan being the first or second in floatplane traffic in the world. ▪ Building a bridge will endanger the flying public – no matter where you put a bridge, it will be in the flight path of small aircraft.
Job Creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A strong development plan should be in place for retaining workers once they've finished building the bridge so they will stay in the community and build other things (i.e. golf course, shopping centers, industrial buildings, and housing developments). ▪ Hire locals first. ▪ Local labor could be used in construction; development of Gravina would create jobs. ▪ But higher paying jobs will go to those from outside the area with experience.

Issue	Public Comment
Land Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ketchikan community needs more land development. ▪ F3 Alternative will open up land. ▪ There is nowhere to build – the no action alternative is not an option. ▪ Access to Gravina Island will open up many areas for fishing, hiking, and sightseeing.
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Locals will have to pay for road/bridge maintenance. ▪ Ferry services are cheaper to maintain than bridges.
Navigation	<p><i>Traffic Management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If the West Channel is the only navigational channel, the flow of maritime traffic will be greatly altered and made much more difficult for those who handle ships. ▪ Scheduled delays will occur to await the passage of other vessels to clear the West Channel. The waits could be a long time if waiting on a cruise ship or a tug pulling a barge. ▪ Greater potential for a collision with another vessel in the West Channel. ▪ The Gravina Access Project Monte Carlo Navigation Simulation describes a greater risk in West Channel than East Channel by 24%. ▪ In an earlier safety study the U.S. Coast Guard identified Tongass Narrows as having the highest risk of any waterway in Southeast Alaska due to water congestion. ▪ To substitute a secondary channel for a primary channel with increased risk and congestion is a crippling blow to maritime commerce transiting Tongass Narrows. ▪ The natural bifurcation of East and West Channels of Tongass Narrows has always provided for orderly arrival/departure and for through traffic of Tongass Narrows by all waterway users. ▪ The Tongass Narrows is the busiest commercial waterway in Southeast Alaska. ▪ F3 severely limits the use of Tongass Narrows by large vessels and will delay all vessels due to added congestion caused by limited use of East Channel if a 60' vertical bridge clearance is not altered to accommodate the large vessels. <p><i>Pilotage</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If access to the port is not convenient, and becomes more risky for vessels, the port will experience fewer calls from large vessels. ▪ West Channel is deep, but narrow. There is only enough room for one vessel at a time. Once you are committed to the West Channel, you cannot turn around if north of the narrows. ▪ West Channel current is substantial, especially during spring. ▪ There is more debris in the West Channel. ▪ Safety and efficiency are critical in the approaches to the downtown

Issue	Public Comment
	<p>berths for cruise ships which are now mostly in the 800 to 975-foot range and cannot easily be turned around in front of the berths.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ F3 introduces need for all ships to turn around in front of their city-front berths, either on arrival or departure. This changes the area used as an anchorage East of Pennock Reef into a turning basin for approach to or from the West Channel. This would mostly eliminate that portion of port capacity represented by anchored ships.
No-Action Alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The needs of the area business owners, residents, and Gravina users are already being met by the present transportation system.
Opening Land on Gravina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hard link access would open Gravina land to various uses. ▪ Gravina Island has much to offer for future development, wildlife viewing, recreation opportunities, and avenues for job creation.
Other Alternatives/ Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A modified F3 alternative that includes a 200' vertical clearance over the East Channel or C3(a) and C4 alternatives should be seriously considered. ▪ The G2, G3, and G4 alternatives have the least impact on Tongass Narrows. ▪ A Gravina crossing, whether in the vicinity of Pennock Island or elsewhere, should not constrict the free flow of commerce that presently exists. If it is to be a bridge, it should be high enough and wide enough for the largest vessels presently using each of the channels of Tongass Narrows. The minimum air draft clearances should be 200' in the East Channel and 150' in the West Channel.
Toll	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No toll should be instated.